

UnitingCare ReGen (RPT) 145 125 125  
Formerly UnitingCare Moreland Hall

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## ReGen

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Medicines and Poisons Scheduling Secretariat (MDP88)

GPO Box 9848

CANBERRA ACT

To whom it may concern,

UnitingCare ReGen, the leading alcohol and other drug treatment and education agency of UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania, supports the interim decision by the Advisory Committee on Medicines Scheduling (ACMS) to reschedule alprazolam (brand name Xanax, Kalma, etc.) to Schedule 8.

Our experience in working with the ever growing number of individuals and families affected by the misuse of this drug highlights the severity and extent of the harm its use is causing within our communities. This experience is consistent with the ACMS findings in support of rescheduling alprazolam:

- There has also been a rapid increase in its use, compared with other benzodiazepines;
- There is substantial research and anecdotal evidence of widespread misuse; &
- Misuse commonly occurs in association with opioids and is associated with increased morbidity and mortality in overdose.

In addition to these findings, our services commonly encounter people experiencing severe harms associated with their use of alprazolam to mediate the effects of methamphetamine use. There is a clear association amongst this group with the commencement of alprazolam use and the onset of aberrant behaviour, frequently resulting in criminal acts.

While we recognise alprazolam's therapeutic benefit as part of an appropriate mental health treatment plan, there is a clear need for changes to its accessibility, both by prescription and in market for diverted drugs.

We recognise that the rescheduling of alprazolam will not completely resolve the issue of misuse and/or diversion and that it will require changes to clinical



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practices relating to this medication. However, reducing the accessibility of this powerful drug will have a clear impact in reducing harms associated with its use.

ReGards,



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